

"THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE."

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN TRINITY CHURCH,

ON FRIDAY, MAY 14th, 1841,

THE DAY OF FASTING AND PRAYER RECOMMENDED BY THE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY

GEORGE UPFOLD, D. D.

RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

PRINTED BY A. JAYNES,—FRANKLIN HEAD,—PITTSBURGH.

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PITTSBURGH, May 15th, 1841

REV. GEORGE UPFOLD, D. D.

Dear Sir,— Many persons of your congregation have expressed a strong desire to peruse the very able and appropriate discourse which you delivered yesterday, on occasion of the National Fast; and in their behalf, we request a copy for publication. Will you be pleased to yield to that desire, by furnishing a copy to the undersigned.

Very Respectfully Your's, &c.

WM. B. M'CLURE.
GEORGE R. WHITE.
SAMUEL P. DARLINGTON.
GEORGE P. SMITH.
WILSON M'CANDLESS.
THOMAS M. HOWE.
JOHN D. DAVIS.

MOUNT HESART, May 15th, 1841.

Gentlemen :

My discourse of yesterday was prepared in haste, amid many interruptions from pastoral and other engagements. I am pleased to find it meets your approbation; and relying on your judgment, such as it is, it is at your service for publication. The manuscript, I fear, cannot be read without transcribing, and being about to set out for the annual Convention of the Diocese, this will not be practicable until my return, at the end of two weeks. At that time, I will comply with your request for a copy for publication.

Very Truly and Respectfully,

Your Friend and Pastor,

GEORGE UPFOLD.

To William B. M'Clure, George R. White, Samuel P. Darlington, George P. Smith, Wilson M'Candless, Thomas M. Howe, and John D. Davis.

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

A RECOMMENDATION.

WHEN a Christian People feel themselves to be overtaken by a great public calamity, it becomes them to humble themselves under the dispensation of Divine Providence; to recognize his righteous government over the children of men; to acknowledge his goodness in time past, as well as their own unworthiness; and to supplicate his merciful protection for the future.

The death of WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, late President of the United States, so soon after his elevation to that high office, is a bereavement peculiarly calculated to be regarded as a heavy affliction, and to impress all minds with a sense of the uncertainty of human things, and of the dependence of nations, as well as of individuals, upon our heavenly Parent.

I have thought, therefore, that I should be acting in conformity with the general expectation and feelings of the community, in recommending, as I now do, to the People of the United States, of every religious denomination, that, according to their several modes and forms of worship, they observe a day of FASTING and PRAYER, by such religious services as may be suitable on the occasion. And I recommend FRIDAY, the 14th day of May next, for that purpose, to the end that, on that day, we may all with one accord, join in humble and reverential approach to HIM, in whose hands we are, invoking HIM to inspire us with a proper spirit and temper of heart and mind, under these frowns of his providence, and still to bestow his gracious benedictions upon our government and our country.

JOHN TYLER.

WASHINGTON, April 13th, 1841.

SPECIAL SERVICE SET FORTH,

BY THE BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE.

Morning Prayer.

PROPER PSALMS,—To be the Anthem in the Burial Service, taken from Psalms xxxix and xc.

FIRST LESSON,—Job xiv.

SECOND LESSON,—Rom. xiii.

Before the two final prayers in the Litany, the SPECIAL PRAYER, given below, to be used.

After the collect for the 4th Sunday after Easter, the SPECIAL COLLECT, printed below, (from the Liturgy of the Church of England,) to be used.

Evening Prayer.

The third selection of Psalms.

FIRST LESSON,—Dan. ix. 3 to 14, inclusive.

SECOND LESSON,—1 Pet. ii. 13, to the end.

The SPECIAL COLLECT to be used after the collect for the day.

The SPECIAL PRAYER to be used before the two final prayers of evening service.

SPECIAL PRAYER.

Oh Lord our God! who art the refuge of thy people, and the only support of nations, we acknowledge thy supreme dominion in all the blessings, and in all the sorrows, wherewith thou hast visited our country. Thy sovereign bounty gave us national existence, and hath in many ways exalted us. Thy sovereign correction hath often overshadowed us with public gloom, and taught us that our only dependence is on thee. And now, O righteous God! thou hast again hid thyself, and covered our whole land with mourning, in removing from us the late PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES—him whom thy providence had recently set over us as thy chief minister, for our civil welfare. We confess that thine hand hath brought this evil upon us. We confess that our sins have deserved this our bereavement of the common Father of the people. And we bow to thy judgment in deep humiliation and reverence, with weeping hearts and contrite spirits, praying thee to sanctify our chastisement by the Holy Ghost, that it may yield in us the fruit of righteousness, to thy glory and our everlasting good.

Give thy benign and tender protection, O Lord, and thy eternal blessing, to the widow and all the family of the late President of the United States, and be to them their perpetual stay and comfort.

Give thine especial protection, O Lord, and thy eternal blessing, to the President of the United States, and vouchsafe to uphold him in health, in strength, in wisdom, and in thy holy fear.

Give thy protection, O Lord, and thy eternal blessing, to the Governor of this State, to the Governors of the other States in this Union, and to all in civil authority, and grant that they may rule faithfully over those committed to their charge.

Give thy protection, O Lord, and thy eternal blessing, to the People of the United States, and make them always obedient to the spirit of order, unity, and concord. And vouchsafe to give peace in our land, and in all the earth, O gracious God!

We ask these things in the name and for the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour—AMEN.

SPECIAL COLLECT.

O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petitions; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us, for the honor of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate—AMEN.

TO THE CONGREGATION OF TRINITY CHURCH,
THIS DISCOURSE, DELIVERED BEFORE THEM,
IS, IN THE HOPE AND TRUST
THAT ITS PERUSAL MAY DEEPEN THEIR RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITIES,
AND LEAD THEM TO LOOK TO THE TRUE AND ONLY SOURCE
OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY,
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

THE AUTHOR

A DISCOURSE, &c.

MY BRETHREN:

The occasion which brings us together this morning, is one of mournful and affecting solemnity. A severe national calamity hath befallen us, without a precedent in the annals of our country. In the mysterious providence of God, the Chief Magistrate of this Republic, within one brief month of his inauguration to office, has fallen before the universal Destroyer, and with all his clustering honors, is laid low in the dust. Another great and good man is numbered with the illustrious dead—cut off, just as he had attained, by a large majority of the suffrages of a free people, the highest summit of earthly ambition; and before opportunity was afforded him, by the maturity of a single measure of government, to develope the intended policy of his administration, and fulfil the confident anticipations of his friends, and disarm the apprehensions and distrust of his opponents.

The event, my brethren, is fraught with salutary and awakening instruction. It brings home to us the fact, so important for us to ponder and improve, but, amid the overweening cares, the ambitious aspirings, and the engrossing pursuits of this perishing world, so com-

monly forgotten,—‘What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!’ A few weeks since, he, whose premature decease a nation mourns, was an honored visiter in this city, on his way to the metropolis, to assume the lofty functions of President of these United States. You saw him amid the pomp and pageantry of a civic triumph, plain and simple in appearance and manners, yet full of hope and bright anticipation. His arrival was hailed with acclamations, and crowds attended his progress. You beheld him, on the same occasion, sequestered for a while from the bustle and parade of his welcome visit, in a scene more congenial to his principles and feelings, an humble and devout worshipper in this house of prayer;* and noted his exemplary demeanor, while he united with us in supplications and praises to the Most High, and listened to the reading and preaching of the word of Truth.

To him, and to all, the season was one of joy and gratulation. He was about to reap the rich reward of long and meritorious services, of faithful and untiring devotion to his country’s welfare. It was an hour of well earned triumph, mingled; doubtless, with a deep sense of the weighty responsibilities he was soon to assume, and with many anxieties and fears. It is passed away, and now, where is he? Beyond the reach of worldly care and trouble, insensible to human praise and censure, a tenant of the tomb. He who had braved the dangers of many a sanguinary conflict, and

* PRESIDENT HARRISON attended divine service in Trinity Church, on the 4th Sunday after Epiphany, Jan. 31st, 1841. On this occasion, the singular appropriateness to his situation of the stated collect, and epistle for the day, particularly the latter, from Romans, chap. 13:1—7, was noticed as a remarkable coincidence.

in battle with savage and civilized foe, had escaped again and again unscathed, hath descended to his grave in a ripe old age, with all a warrior's fame and glory, but without a warrior's ordinary fate. With an "eye undimmed, and natural strength unabated," he gave promise of many years of usefulness in the exalted station which he adorned. But in an unexpected moment, his hale and vigorous frame, which had endured so many hardships and privations, and surmounted them all, yielded to the ravages of a violent disease, sudden in its incursion, and rapid in its progress; and breathing out aspirations for his country's welfare, and expressing his earnest desire that the principles of that Constitution which he had so recently sworn to defend, might be carried out in their integrity, according to his own intention and purpose, he sank without a struggle into the embrace of death. His last hour was serene and tranquil. He descended to the tomb, as the sun descends in a bright and beauteous summer's evening, after a tempestuous day, leaving a golden radiance of exemplary virtue and devoted patriotism behind him as he set, and lighting up and softening the angry clouds as they rolled away, with the brilliant hues of christian fortitude and resignation. He died, (so his clerical attendant testifies,) as a good man dies; his final moments cheered and sustained by the consolations of that religion, for which, in his inaugural address, he had with deep emotion, and impressive solemnity, expressed his "profound reverence." His faith and hope were firmly fixed on that divine Savior, to whom he had long since consecrated his affections, and devoted his life; and his immortal part, we are warranted in trusting, "delivered

from the burden of the flesh, is in joy and felicity," in the repose of paradise, there awaiting, with the congregated host of the saved, the resurrection of the just, and that "perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul," which is promised to those who die in the Lord, "in the eternal and everlasting glory" of the kingdom of our God.

The constitutional successor of our deceased chief magistrate, with a promptitude which reflects credit on his sensibilities as a man and a christian, and on his character and station as the representative head of the nation, has recommended the observance of this day, as a day of humiliation and prayer throughout the length and breadth of our afflicted land; and in fitting and appropriate language, invites the people of these United States to mourn—not for him, who, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, has been taken away—but for themselves and their country. It is a wise, appropriate and virtuous recommendation, signally called for, and judiciously timed; and I trust is meeting at this hour from the great body of our fellow-citizens, as I am gratified to find it is in this city,* a correspondent response. It much becomes us as a nation to "consider our ways"—to ponder our causes of offence towards the great and glorious Sovereign of the universe—to regard this afflicting dispensation as an indication of the divine displeasure, and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and acknowledging and confessing our manifold transgressions, deprecate with penitent and contrite hearts, the severity of his

* The National Fast was particularly well observed by the citizens of Pittsburgh: the places of business were all closed, and the churches were crowded.

merited indignation, and implore his mercy and forgiveness, his continued grace and protection.

The exemplary virtues of our deceased President, his high and honorable character, his stern and inflexible integrity, and his eminent public services, (were this the time and place for eulogium,) would be fitting subjects for commendation. But the purpose of our assembling to-day, is not to eulogize a fellow-man, however deserving, but to humble ourselves as a nation before a justly offended God. The lamented death of the departed patriot, furnishes the *occasion* for this solemnity, not the *theme*, by which it is to be improved. Your preacher feels that he has a higher duty to discharge, a duty more consonant with the responsibilities of his sacred office, and, in his judgment, more strictly accordant both with the letter and the spirit of the official recommendation, which has called us together. And the appropriate subject of discourse, appears to him to be, not the illustrious individual, whose premature decease we lament, but the causes existing among us, which, without incurring the imputation of presumptuously prying into the secret counsels of the Almighty, we may adduce, and bring home to ourselves individually and collectively, for the severe national chastisement, with which we are visited, together with the urgent obligations growing out of such chastisement.

With this view of the course which it becomes me to pursue on the present occasion, I have selected, as affording appropriate and profitable topics of consideration, the following words of Jeremiah, recorded in the second chapter of his Prophecy, at the 13th verse:

"My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken ME, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

These words are an authoritative condemnation of the Israelites for their national sins. Their great and prevalent offence was idolatry. For this they were visited with repeated judgments from God, with a view to reclaim them from their wilful rebellion against his authority, and their shameful forgetfulness of his mercies. At one time pestilence was permitted to stalk through the land, sweeping away the guilty inhabitants as with the "*besom of destruction.*" At another, war, with its attendant evils, devastated their country, and brought desolation and woe to every door and every bosom. And at another, both these terrible instruments of divine wrath combined, were employed against a perverse nation, teaching them in language of awful import, that "verily there is a God who judgest the earth." Still they transgressed, and seemingly bade defiance to Omnipotence, setting up "their graven images on every high hill, and under every green tree," or worshipping the idols of the surrounding heathen.

This propensity to idolatry on the part of a people so peculiarly circumstanced as were the ancient Jews, and so pre-eminently favored with the light of a divine revelation, when all the nations of the earth besides were covered with one dense cloud of moral darkness, is one of those perversities of the human heart, for which it is difficult to conceive and assign an adequate motive. In an age so fruitful in examples of every kind and sort of evil, their conduct in this particular stood

alone. It was a perfect anomaly. The heathen, by whom they were surrounded, adhered with singular pertinacity of devotion, to their national deities. Change of religion, such as *their's* was, was by them never dreamed of. The thought was never for a moment entertained; and the attempt would have called forth instant and universal execration. But the Jews, amid the fullest and clearest proofs of the existence and power of the Almighty; with an express revelation of his will, attested by undoubted and stupendous miracles; and with reiterated experience of his goodness on the one hand, and of the certainty and terribleness of his wrath on the other; the Jews, by a most unaccountable infatuation, were continually prone to abandon the great and glorious object of *their* national worship, repeatedly turned recreant to the faith of *their* fathers, and forsaking the living and true God, bowed down before the senseless idols of the surrounding nations. And not content with worshipping the "host of heaven," and adoring "stocks and stones, graven by art and man's device," they exalted them to a level with the great Jehovah, put their trust in them, and actually looked to them with confidence for deliverance from those very judgments, which so surely demonstrated his existence and power, and which were sent expressly to rebuke and punish their impious and revolting idolatry.

This strange perversity of heart,—this singular infatuation, with its astounding character, its folly and its guilt,—the prophet, speaking in the person and by the authority of the Almighty, sets forth in terms of mingled reproof and compassion, in the text and context. "Wherefore, saith he, after having adverted to the

manifold instances of the divine goodness, which they, as a nation, had experienced, and their most ungrateful requital of the same—“*Wherefore, I will plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children’s children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed THEIR GODS, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens! at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken ME, the fountain of living waters; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*”

My brethren, the conduct of the ancient people of God, which is here described and rebuked, affords but too faithful a representation of the prevalent disposition and conduct of multitudes at the present day. The sun of righteousness has indeed, in our case, dispelled the gloom of actual idolatry. We are not the blind, deluded, pitiable worshippers of stocks and stones; but amid the effulgence of light which shines on us from heaven, a mist of thick darkness still overspreads the minds of multitudes in this favored land, and is cherished and loved, and preferred before the purifying radiance of evangelical truth. There is an IDOLATRY of the HEART and ITS AFFECTIONS, extensively and alarmingly prevailing. And this, drawing us off from the God of our fathers, indisposing us to his service, and keeping us estranged and rebellious, is as insulting and offensive to the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth,—as

heinous in its nature, as deep and damning in its guilt, and as fatal in its consequences, as the most degrading and revolting worship of graven images, with its kindred abominations. And this species of idolatry, this constructive idolatry, if I may so speak, is prevalent to a degree which causes the christian philanthropist to tremble for his fellow man, and for the country in which he lives. This criminal infatuation is startling and alarming; and with bitter anguish of heart he contemplates its progress, beholds its pernicious influence, and anticipates its certain and fearful results. "Evil, be thou my good," is the practical language of multitudes who dwell in this enlightened and christian land; who possess the revelation of Jesus Christ, bear by baptism the christian name, and participate in all their fulness and excellency, the conditional privileges of the covenant of grace. And the words of the text afford a graphic representation of the spirit and conduct of such offenders, and describe with accuracy and fidelity their moral turpitude. For in reference to their mental perversity, the alienation of their hearts from God, their exclusive devotion to worthless, and oftentimes criminal objects of pursuit and enjoyment, their proud and presumptuous self-dependence, and the refuges of lies to which they resort to secure them from the disastrous consequences of their unbelief and impiety, and from the wrath of an incensed and insulted God and Savior; awful apprehensions of which their consciences continually force upon them, it may with truth and emphasis be said, "*My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters;*

*and have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns,
that can hold no water."*

And my brethren, if this be true of individuals—and that it is true, does not conscience even now proclaim to some among ourselves—may it not with equal truth be spoken of us collectively, as a nation? Let us see if this portrait does not meet with a resemblance in the prevalent vices and the alarming irreligion of our age and nation. Let us review the past, and contemplate the present moral condition of our common country, and the conduct of its inhabitants, and say, if the language of the prophet is not singularly appropriate in its application to ourselves, and if an affecting and lamentable parallel is not to be found between us and that ancient people of God, whom he so severely condemns and reprobates.

From its very start,—from the eventful hour when the former colonies of Great Britain rose up in their might and majesty in righteous resistance of their political oppressors, and declared themselves to be free and independent,—this nation has been signally "*favor-ed of the Lord.*" Instances of the gracious interposition of Almighty God in our behalf, are inscribed on almost every page of our national history. Such interposition was again and again manifested, and that in the most striking and impressive manner, during the war of the Revolution; and again and again was it acknowledged in the official communications of the great and good man, who led our armies; and responded to by his illustrious compatriots, composing the continental Con-

gress, in their public acts.* It is unnecessary to particularize: the proofs are familiar to every one conversant with the history of that great national conflict, and are enduring mementos of our indebtedness as a people to a beneficent and overruling Providence, for aid and direction in its progress, and for its successful and glorious termination.

* That august assembly, at an early period, formally and solemnly recognized its dependence on that Omnipotent Being, who controls the destinies of nations, as well as of individuals, in the appointment of Chaplains, to open its daily session with prayer. One of the Reverend Gentlemen chosen to this office, was our late venerated Diocessan, the Rt. Rev. WILLIAM WHITE, D. D. "clarum et venerabile nomen,"—then an assistant minister, and very soon after, the Rector of the united parishes of Christ Church, and St. Peter's, Philadelphia. At the commencement of the dispute between the mother country and her colonies, after mature deliberation he took side with the latter, and adhered to it with characteristic consistency and integrity. His sentiments and actions in connection with this matter, while they bespeak his pure and disinterested patriotism, afford the best answer to the opprobrium which was then, and by the ignorant and prejudiced is even now, unjustly cast upon that branch of the Church Catholic which he so long and faithfully served, and pre-eminently adorned—that of being in its organization and its spirit, uncongenial to a Republican form of government; and from its supposed, but unfounded identification in interest and feeling, with the Church of England, whence it was derived, and with the State, with which that Church is so intimately connected by the Constitution of the Realm and the Legislation of Parliament, inimical to our political institutions, and dangerous to our liberties. They are thus related by his biographer, and they deserve all the publicity that can be given to them:

"Mr. White, carefully and fully reflected upon the principles involved in that great contest—(the troubles between Great Britain and her colonies.) To such reflection, he felt himself bound by a strong sense of duty as a free subject, a christian, and a minister of the Gospel; and in the last character, on account more especially, of his connection with the Church of England. His talents and sound judgment, united with extensive information, well qualified him for an examination of the dispute. He had, long before that period, carefully studied the English history, and the principles of the English Constitution; and his reading on these subjects had been considerable. The result of his careful reflection was, a decided opinion in favor of the claims of the colonies, to which he adhered, and in which he uniformly and consistently acted during the whole

And, my brethren, the same divine interposition, which was so frequently and so especially manifested during the struggle for national independence, was equally conspicuous after that independence was acknowledged by the parent country, and our new-born Republic assumed a place among the nations. Amid

contest. His account of the course adopted by him, and of the motives which led to it, is too interesting not to be given in his own language:

"The principles which I had adopted," says he, "are those which enter into the Constitution of England, from the Saxon times, however the fact may have been disputed by Mr. Hume; and even confirmed and acted on at the revolution in 1688. The late measures of the English government contradicted the rights which the colonists had brought with them to the wilds of America, and which were until then respected by the mother country. The worst state of dependent provinces has been that which bound them to a country itself free. This is a fact sufficiently illustrated in the case of those of Rome, which were more miserable under the Republic than under the Emperors, monsters as most of them were. Our quarrel was, substantially, with our free fellow-subjects of Great Britain; and we never objected to the constitutional prerogatives of the Crown, until it threw us out of its protection. This it did, independently of other measures, by what was called the Prohibitory Act, passed in November, 1775, authorizing the seizure of all vessels belonging to persons of this country, whether friends or foes. The act arrived about the time of the publication of Faine's 'Common Sense.' Had the act been contrived by some person in league with Paine, in order to give effect to his production, no expedient could have been more ingenious. To a reader of that flimsy work, at the present day, the confessed effect of it at the time, is a matter of surprise. Had it issued six months sooner, it would have excited no feeling, except that of resentment against the author. But there had come a crisis, which the foremost leaders of American resistance were reluctant to realize to their minds. * * *

* * * * - * * * * * * * * * * These things are said without disrespect to the personal character of the King of Great Britain. He took the part, into which perhaps any man would have been betrayed by the same circumstances. You know my construction of the scriptural precepts on the subject of obedience to civil rulers. It engaged my most serious consideration; and under the sense of my responsibility to God, I am still of opinion, that they respect the ordinary administration of men in power; who are not to be resisted from private regards, or for the seeking of changes, however promising in theory. In a mixed government, the constitutional rights of any one branch are as much the ordinance of God, as those of any

the brilliant success which had crowned our arms, and the triumph and joy which filled every patriot bosom at the result, the end of the war was, nevertheless, a dark and gloomy hour of our history. The sun of Liberty had risen, and was shining in bright and glorious prospect on the destinies of our country; but its

other. This view of the subject would be abandoned, if it could be proved to be more fruitful of disorder than its opposite. The latter is rather the cause of civil war, as in the rebellions of 1715 and '45. To talk of hereditary right, when the question is of the sense of the scriptural precepts, is beside the mark; for they look no further than to the present possession of the power. The contrary theory lands us in despotism; and if any should be reconciled to this by the notion of its securing of tranquillity, there cannot be a greater mistake. If there be no constitutional check, it will be found unconstitutionally, in some such shape as that of the prætorian guards of Rome, or of the janizaries of Turkey, or of the combinations of grandees of Russia.

"However satisfactory this train of sentiment, at the crisis referred to, the question of expediency was problematical, considering the immense power of the mother country. Perhaps, had the issue depended on my determination, it would have been for submission, with the determined and steady continuance of rightful claim. But when my countrymen in general had chosen the dreadful measure of forcible resistance—for certainly the spirit was almost universal at the time of arming—it was the dictate of conscience to take what seemed the right side. When matters were verging to independence, there was less to be said for dissent from the voice of the country, than in the beginning. Great Britain had not relinquished a particle of her claim. The commissioners did not pretend to any power of this sort from the Crown; and had they pretended to it, there was no power in the Crown to suspend acts of Parliament, or to promise the repeal of them. On this ground, it must be perceived that the least defensible persons were they who gave their services to the engaging in the war, and then abandoned the cause.

* * * * * * * * * "Although possessed of these sentiments, I never beat the ecclesiastical drum. My two brethren in the assistant ministry preached animating sermons, approbatory of the war, which were printed—as did the most prominent of our clergy, Dr. Smith. Our aged Rector, in consequence of increasing weakness, was retiring from the world. Not long before this time, he resigned his Rectorship, was succeeded by Mr. Duehe, and soon after died. Being invited to preach before a battalion, I declined; and mentioned to the Colonel, who was one of the warmest spirits of the day, my objection to the making of the ministry instrumental to the war. I continued, as did all of us, to pray for the King, until Sunday (inclusively)

beams were intercepted by mists and clouds, which threw at times a chill over the most sanguine heart. The emancipation of the people was accomplished, freedom was achieved, the chains of political servitude

before the 4th of July, 1776. Within a short time after, I took the oath of allegiance to the United States, and have since remained faithful to it. My intentions were upright, and most seriously weighed. I hope they were not in contrariety to my duty.'

"At the time of Mr. White's taking the oath of allegiance, as above mentioned," continues his biographer, "the following incident is said to have occurred: When he went to the court-house for the purpose, a gentleman of his acquaintance, observing his design, intimated to him, by a gesture, the danger to which he would expose himself. After having taken the oath, he remarked, before leaving the court-house, to the gentleman alluded to—'I perceive, by your gesture, that you thought I was exposing my neck to great danger by the step which I have taken. But I have not taken it without full deliberation. I know my danger, and that it is greater on account of my being a clergyman of the Church of England. But I trust in Providence. The cause is a just one, and, I am persuaded, will be protected.'

"In September, 1777, Mr. White retired with his family to the house of his brother-in-law, Mr. Aquilla Hall, in Hartford county, Maryland. The British army was then advancing to Philadelphia, of which they took possession soon afterwards. 'At this eventful crisis,' he says, 'I received notice that Congress, who had fled to Yorktown, (borough of York, Pa.) had chosen me their Chaplain. They chose with me, the Rev. Mr. Duffield, of the Presbyterian communion. Nothing could have induced me to accept the appointment at such a time, even had the emolument been an object, which it was not, but the determination to be consistent in my principles, and in the part taken. Under this impression, I divided my time between Congress and my family, which the double chaplainship permitted, until the evacuation of the city in the June following. My acceptance of the chaplainship was a few days before the arrival of the intelligence of the capture of General Burgoyne; which tended to a revival from the general depression occasioned by the capture of Philadelphia, and by the advance of an army on the frontier of New York, the success of which, would have severed the Eastern States from the Southern.'

"He continued Chaplain until that body removed to New York. When, after the adoption of the existing Constitution, the Congress of the United States returned to Philadelphia, he was again chosen one of their Chaplains, and continued to be so chosen at each successive Congress, by the Senate, until the removal of the seat of government to Washington, in the year 1801."—Memoir of the Life of Bishop White, by the Rev. Bird Wilson, D. D. pp. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51—54, 55, 56.

were broken; but the government of the country was inchoative and unsettled. With many, the stability of our national independence was exceedingly problematical. Our legislative councils were alarmingly divided; and so was public sentiment. All was perplexity and dismay within, and distrust and alarm without. At home, there were anxieties and fears; and abroad, on the part of our allies, serious misgivings; and on that of our late formidable enemy, anticipated disaster and ruin. At this truly eventful period, there was a manifest interposition of the sovereign Disposer of events, in behalf of this republic. After several years of agitation, of protracted and painful discussion, and after many conflicting devices had been proposed and rejected, a Convention of Delegates from the several States of the Confederacy was determined on by the general Congress, and assented to by the respective State Legislatures. The Delegates were chosen. They assembled in Convention, in the City of Philadelphia, on the 14th of May, 1787, and soon after organized, by the very appropriate and judicious selection of the illustrious Washington to preside over their deliberations. They consulted long and carefully on the condition of the country, its wants, and their remedy; but for a time with little effect: for there were many conflicting interests to reconcile, and sectional partialities and prejudices to be conciliated, and vague theories and Utopian schemes, urged with the wonted pertinacity of political projectors, to be exposed and overthrown. These all served to retard action, and produce perplexity and delay. It was at this stage of their deliberations, that a venerable Delegate from

Pennsylvania, distinguished no less for philosophical attainments and profound wisdom, than for his private virtues as a man, and his unbending integrity and incorruptible patriotism as a statesman, proposed the daily invocation of that great and glorious Being, who had so signally befriended the country during the recent revolutionary struggle, but whose sovereign agency the Convention had hitherto apparently forgotten.* The proposition was warmly advocated by

* The venerable delegate was the celebrated philosopher and statesman, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, L. L. D. who had rendered such essential services to his country, from the commencement to the termination of the revolutionary contest, particularly as a negotiator abroad, and who, on his recent return from the court of France, was summoned by a constituency which knew and estimated his worth, almost by acclamation, to this eventful council; a summons which, notwithstanding his advanced age, and increasing infirmities, with his wonted patriotism he promptly obeyed; and his proposal to have the daily business of the Convention opened by prayer, with the remarks with which he endeavored to recommend it, are alike creditable to his head and to his heart, and deserve to be remembered by his countrymen.

On Thursday, the 28th of June, 1787, when the Convention had been in session upwards of a month, and had made very little advance in the work committed to it, Dr. Franklin, (says Mr. Madison, in his record of the debates and proceedings of the Convention, lately published,) addressed the chair, and said—"Mr. President, the small progress we have made, after four or five weeks close attendance and continual reasonings with each other—our different sentiments on almost every question—several of the last producing as many noes as ayes—is, methinks, a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding. We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those republics which, having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution, now no longer exist. And we have viewed modern states all round Europe, but find none of their constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

" In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings. In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and

several members, (for a sense of religious obligation was not then extinct in the breasts of our legislators,

graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or, do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth,—*that God governs in the affairs of men.* And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that '*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.*' I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and by-word down to future ages; and what is more, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.

"I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."

"Mr. Sherman seconded the motion.

"Mr. Hamilton, and several others, expressed their apprehensions, that however proper such a resolution might have been at the beginning of the Convention, it might at this late day, in the first place, bring on it some disagreeable animadversions; and in the second, lead the public to believe that the embarrassments and dissensions within the Convention had suggested the measure. It was answered by Dr. Franklin, Mr. Sherman and others, that the past omission of a duty could not justify a further omission; that the rejection of such a proposition would expose the Convention to more unpleasant animadversions than the adoption of it; and that the alarm out of doors that might be excited for the state of things within, would at least be as likely to do good as ill.

"Mr. Williamson observed, that the true cause of the omission could not be mistaken. The Convention had no funds.

"Mr. Randolph proposed, in order to give a favorable aspect to the measure, that a sermon be preached, at the request of the Convention, on the 4th of July, the Anniversary of Independence, and that thenceforward prayers, &c. be read in the Convention every morning. Dr. Franklin seconded this motion. After several unsuccessful attempts for silently postponing this matter by adjourning, the adjournment was at length carried without any vote on the motion."—*Madison Papers, vol. 2d, pp. 284, '85, '86.*

but only slumbered,) and though the measure was not adopted, they who opposed it, appear to have done so, as much from chagrin and mortification at their previous negligence, as from any real and serious objection to a proposal so obviously proper, and so urgently required. This seems to be indicated by the reasons adduced against it, and by the fact, that it was not formally rejected, but evaded by a motion to adjourn.

The very proposition itself, however, with the impressive remarks with which it was enforced by the mover, was propitiatory in its tendency, and exerted a salutary influence on the subsequent deliberations of the Convention. God was acknowledged, if not especially and *officially* sought and enquired after; and soon the consultations of those illustrious men resulted in devising and recommending the Federal Constitution; the wise, efficient, and well working system of government, under which we have since lived and prospered, and in the space of little more than half a century, have grown up a wide-spread and mighty empire.

This measure, and its adoption by a majority of the States of the Confederacy, was evidently the result of an overruling Providence; and its effects were at once benign and salutary. It was the breaking forth of the sun from amid the mists and clouds which obscured its brightness, and intercepted its vivifying beams. Dispelling the portentous signs of approaching storm, it irradiated our political horizon with cheering and glorious light; and caused the newly planted Republic to shoot up from its temporary depression, and its threatening decay, with vigorous growth and animating promise. It met the pressing exigencies of the country,

and provided an efficient remedy for the disease that was sapping the very vitals of our liberties; and arrested at once the ruin that appeared impending. Our hard earned freedom was established by it, on a solid and substantial basis. A national character was created, and a national spirit infused into the people of the several States, concentrating their patriotic energies, and making them in reality, what the motto of the Republic held out in promise,—**E PLURIBUS UNUM.** It secured union, tranquillity, prosperity at home, and respect, credit, and confidence abroad.

And, my brethren, the great CAUSE of this happy extrication from difficulty and danger, was recognized by, and His over-ruling influence deeply engraven on the hearts of the whole American people, at the time. This evident interposition of Divine Providence elicited their public and grateful acknowledgments. God was honored as the source of this inestimable blessing; and special praise was offered to Him, for having inspired the Convention, from which so much was expected, and towards which all eyes were turned with such deep solicitude, with wisdom and prudence and justice; for having infused a spirit of conciliation and mutual concession into its deliberations, and for having so remarkably controlled and harmonized the conflicting opinions and prejudices of its members, and induced the noble sacrifice of sectional interests and partialities on the altar of the general public good. The oil that was poured out on the troubled waters, and calmed and tranquilized the threatening billows, was clearly discerned as descending from Him, who alone has power to say to the political and moral, as well as to the natu-

ral ocean, when its waves run high, and rage and roar in the fury of the storm,—“*Peace; be still.*”

And, my brethren, at a later period also in our brief national history, when darkness overspread our political horizon, and a tempest of no little severity burst upon our beloved country; at a later period, fresh in the memory of most of us, when the hoarse clarion of war sounded its notes of alarm and preparation, and summoned the brave and the free to defend their national rights, violated by repeated aggressions on the part of our ancient enemy, from our peaceful policy, and our supposed feebleness, grown wanton in outrage and insult;—in that gloomy hour, when a sense of national wrongs warmed every patriotic bosom to resistance and defence, did God again interpose in our behalf—throw around us the shield of his protection—stretch forth his sustaining arm—bring us with honor out of a contest fearfully unequal, and restore to our borders the blessings of peace. And then, too, there was a public national acknowledgment of Him, who had proved himself to be “a strong tower of defence against the face of our enemies,” appointed by the Chief Magistrate of the Union, and responded to by the constituted authorities of the several States; and the hearts of all were bowed, as the heart of one man, before a Throne of grace, in grateful recognition of the divine goodness, and paeans of thanksgiving ascended, throughout the length and breadth of the rejoicing land, to God, “the Supreme Governor of all things,” “our Savior and mighty Deliverer.”

But, my brethren, amid a long interval of tranquillity and prosperity, “*the heart of the people has waxed*

gross,”—has been lifted up with pride and presumptuous self-dependence; and God has been, not *measurably*, but alas! *immeasurably* forgotten and forsaken! Religion, it is true, has not in all its features been obliterated in our national proceedings. In our official and judicial oaths, and in our forms of legal procedure, there are traces of religious principle, little adverted to, but permanently fixed by common consent; and a formal recognition of a **SUPREME DEITY**—an appeal being made in the one case to his omniscience and retributive justice; and the injunctions of our writs, in the other, running in the name of the people of the State, or of the United States, by “*the grace of God, free and independent.*” In our national Legislature, also, and in those of some of the States, the business of the day is opened with prayer by clergymen chosen to perform that duty. In some of the States of this Union, too, (not more though, with shame and sorrow be it spoken, than about one-third of the whole number,) the time-honored custom of an annual Thanksgiving “to Almighty God, for the fruits of the earth, and all the other blessings of his merciful providence,”* is authoritatively proclaimed and recommended by the Executive. And in some of the annual messages of our Rulers to the respective Legislatures of the country, there is found a faint and formal recognition of the Supreme Being; and an allusion, as brief and cold as may be, to his continued goodness and our indebted-

* Book of Common Prayer, of the Protestant Episcopal Church,—which observes the first Thursday in November, yearly, as a day of Thanksgiving for the bounties of a beneficent Providence, unless some other day is appointed by the civil authority of a State, or of the United States, and then observes that day.

ness. For, frequently, the sentiment appears to have been uttered, as if it was something to be ashamed of; and an air of constraint is apparent in the phraseology, as if it was something which custom demanded, and the omission of which, might perhaps endanger the popularity of its author with a certain portion of the community; while at the same time, the expression of the sentiment might offend a certain other portion,—which, alas! for the character and safety of our country! has of late years exercised no little influence in our political affairs, and over our candidates for popular favor,—a class who openly ridicule and repudiate God and Christ, blaspheme and insult his holy name, laugh to scorn the religion of the cross, and *all* religion, and glory in their shame.

With the exceptions before mentioned, my brethren, the fact is not to be concealed—and it is stated without any reference to individuals, or to political parties and opinions, as the result of painful observation of public men and their proceedings, the expression of which, I should be unfaithful to my trust, as a minister of Jesus Christ, to withhold from you, the people of my charge;—with these exceptions, alas! God has been forgotten and forsaken by those who control our public affairs—his agency in government unacknowledged—his former and continued mercies disregarded; and dependence on Him, who controls the destinies of nations, and from whom, all wise and wholesome counsels do proceed, and national blessings and national judgments come, practically thrown off. What wonder then, that our unexampled prosperity as a people has received a check¹ that commercial derangements and

mercantile embarrassments exist! that there is distress and suffering in the land! and that portentous clouds again hover over our political horizon, and threaten our national repose!

And forgotten and forsaken, as God has been by our *Rulers*, how is it with those whom they *rule?* My brethren, the answer is alarming! With truth and emphasis, and by every well wisher to his country's welfare, and every christian believer, with sorrow of heart must it be pronounced, as of Israel of old,—“*My people have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters!*” Are proofs demanded? Are instances, examples, illustrations required? You have them, my brethren, in the practical irreligion of the day—in the prevalence of avowed and undisguised infidelity, and in the unblushing profligacy and the gross and revolting licentiousness which follow in their train. You may find them in the astounding increase of every species of vice and immorality; in the unprecedented number and the unparalleled enormity of the offences against the laws both of God and man, with which our newspapers teem; in the utter destitution of moral principle and common honesty which so extensively prevails, as seen in the multiplied and wholesale depredations of men previously of character and standing, some of them of high moral and religious reputation, occupying responsible stations, and entrusted with public funds—annunciations of which come to us on the wings of every wind, from the East and the West, the North and the South. You may discern them in the wild and reckless spirit of speculation which characterizes so many among us, and which has almost grown into a distin-

guishing national feature; in the alarming increase of pomp and display, and costly and luxurious living; in a mournful and wide departure from our former republican simplicity of manners and habits; in the aping of the expensive follies of the higher classes of European society; in the importation of the worst and most debasing amusements of the old world, and in the enormous expenditure lavished on histrionic adventurers—on singers and fiddlers and lascivious dancing girls, of the capitals of the old world; corrupt to the very core. You may discover them, in the increasing indifference, particularly in our large cities, to the sanctity of the Lord's day, and in the open and offensive violation of its salutary and divinely enjoined observance; in the revolting profanity which breaks upon the ear; in our streets and public places, from men, and fathers of families, and youth—yea, from the lips of prattling infancy, and—O! most pitiable and alarming—oftentimes from the mouths of the old and gray-headed, tottering on the verge of the grave; in the spread and prevalence of soul-destroying intemperance, and in the various associations which tempt to and cherish that bane of public morals and happiness, that unalloyed curse of the poor man's home, that cruel tyrant of the rich man's domestic circle. You may find them in the corrupt and vitiated taste which patronizes a profligate, demoralizing and obscene press; which supports those foul and loathsome newspapers which of late years have sprung up in most of our large cities, and which are not only tolerated, but encouraged, at the expense of all that is decent and pure and moral, in manners, in habits, in mind,—publications which pander to the vilest propen-

sities of the heart, and are the fruitful and fearful incentives to vice and crime among our youth, and even manhood—whose atrocious libels on all that is upright and honorable and good—whose scurrilous assaults on character—whose unblushing infidelity—whose disgusting details of offences and scenes, which it is contaminating to think of, much less to name, are the passports to their circulation—and alas! for the interests of public morals, and the purity of our youth of both sexes, which not only obtain circulation by means of the cupidity of their publishers, but are subscribed for, purchased, read, by persons who call themselves respectable, and introduced into their counting houses, and places of business, and their domestic circles, with an avidity and a recklessness of consequences, evincing not only a most degrading vitiation of taste, but an alarming corruption of heart.

Time would fail, my brethren, to adduce all the proofs and all the instances that exist among us, that as a people we have *forsaken* and *are forsaking* the FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS, the God of our fathers; and that our national sins have multiplied and are multiplying to a fearful extent. This lamentable change in the tone and character of our public morals, is most conspicuous, glaring and offensive, in our large cities, especially our commercial ports. But alas! this malign influence, this devastating moral pestilence, is not confined to these, proverbially “great public sores.” It is diffused through the land, and more or less affects all classes of society. The contagion has spread, and is spreading, and doing its work of death in our remote villages and sequestered hamlets. And every where,

it is a source of unaffected sorrow, of deep and bitter lamentation to the christian philanthropist, and indeed to every lover of his country; and most importunately does it call for national humiliation, and demand that we humble ourselves, individually and collectively, before a Throne of mercy, and with broken and contrite hearts, and with resolutions of reformation and amendment, deprecate our manifold and grievous offences as a people, against the **GOD OF PROVIDENCE** and the **GOD OF GRACE**.

This, however, enormous as it is, is only one of the “*evils*,” of which God has cause to complain. “*My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters; and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*” With the Jews, these broken cisterns were the idols of “wood and stone, graven by art and man’s device,” which they perversely worshipped, and on which they depended for protection and deliverance. And in the application of the complaint to ourselves, we may instance the *constructive* idols on which our hearts and affections are concentrated; and pursuing which, to the neglect, and oftentimes to an utter forgetfulness of God, we may be said to worship.

Prominent among these, is *money*. With thousands, it is the god of their adoration, the all-absorbing object of their care and pursuit. The love of money is the prevalent passion of the age. It is lamentably the engrossing passion and propensity of the nation, of which we form a part. Money—not as means of usefulness, of fulfilling the divine law, which enjoins us to do good and distribute of our competence and our abundance, to promote and sustain the cause of Christ in the world,

and relieve our necessitous fellow-creatures in their distress—not as enabling us to exercise benevolence and practical charity on an extensive scale, and become public benefactors, as well as the private almoners of the poor and needy, but as ministering to our own selfish indulgence, or as adding to our power and influence, or as creating a fancied independence, or as gratifying a desire of accumulation, or as meeting a craving and sordid avarice—money, for such unworthy purposes, and to accomplish such vain and worthless ends, is the great and prominent object of the pursuit of multitudes among us. So far is this passion for money carried; so exclusively does it occupy attention, and concentrate our energies in its acquisition, as almost to warrant the sarcasm of a recent foreign traveler, which I have somewhere seen, "*that money was the single idea of an American; and how it might be made, the solitary aim of his ambition.*" It is indeed the prominent thought of too many among us,—the object of an idolatrous devotion. Our conversation, for the most part, turns upon it; and go where you will, *dollars—dollars*—grate upon the ear from almost every group you meet—the first intelligible accents of lisping infancy—the inspiring theme of youthful anticipation—the favorite topic of matured manhood—and almost the last lingering aspiration of decrepitude and age. And not only is money sought for its own sake, and on account of the supposed advantages it confers, and the selfish indulgences to which it is able to minister; but alas! by many, it is made a source of confidence, independent of God; and it is regarded and estimated and pursued, as if *it*,

and *it alone*, were all that is wanting to secure us from calamity, deliver us from affliction, and solace us under misfortune. Forgetting the fountain whence riches, with all other temporal blessings, flow—and how often and how unexpectedly they “*take to themselves wings and flee away*,” we make them our dependence, our hope, our strong confidence; we cling to them for protection; we look to them for deliverance; we regard them as a sort of panacea for every difficulty; and thus “*hew out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*” What folly, my brethren, and what guilt! are involved in the love of money,—in this inordinate pursuit of money,—in this presumptuous dependence on money; and that at the expense of the God of our salvation, and of our duty as accountable creatures and redeemed sinners! How can we expect the divine blessing on ourselves, and on our country, when we are so “*wholly given to this debasing idolatry?*” And when we consider the disonor done to God, by our dependence on this “*broken cistern,*”—by the violations of our duty to him, in our eager pursuit of the phantom, must we not fear—have we not reason to apprehend—*his* terrible displeasure;—the breaking forth of that fierce and holy jealousy with which *he* regards all things that interfere with the love and reverence and adoration due to *HIM*; the fulfilment of that fearful threatening with which he enforced his express command to his ancient people,—a command, in spirit, equally binding on ourselves,—“*Thou shalt have none other god besides me?*”

For several years past, my brethren, our national prosperity has been seriously arrested and impaired.

Commercial embarrassments and difficulties have multiplied; great and general distress has pervaded almost all classes of the community, and one universal cry has resounded from all quarters of our wide extended country, of "*hard times*," of losses in business, of fluctuations in the currency, of depreciation of prices and of the value of property, of general stagnation and derangement of trade, amounting in the aggregate, if half only were true, to a general national calamity. And in the proposed remedies for existing difficulties, what has been the predominant sentiment? Is it creditable to our religious sensibilities? Is it becoming to a (nominally at least) christian nation? Have we thought of calling upon God in our distress? On the contrary, have we not proposed to ourselves plans of relief, independent of him, and thus "*hewed out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water?*"

Some have dwelt with great complacency and confident anticipation, on the indomitable spirit of enterprise, and the irrepressible industry, so characteristic of and so honorable to our countrymen, and which has contributed so much to our former prosperity. They have relied on these, to bring matters round and turn the tide in our favor. But by themselves, without the divine blessing, and that blessing sought and secured by correspondent piety and virtue, what are they?—of what value? They are mere airy imaginings, the shadows of a shade, "*broken cisterns that can hold no water.*"

With others, our prolific and varied soil, rich in valuable and diversified productions, and teeming with the fruits of the earth, afford the ground of their confidence and hope; as if, independent of that *creative*

Power, who sends “rain upon the earth, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness,” this would meet our necessities, and remove the evils of which we complain. As if this unquestionable advantage, this peculiar blessing of the land we inhabit, and for which our gratitude and praise are especially demanded, to the great and glorious Fountain whence it springs; as if this was a certain and uniform dependence, exposed to no adverse contingencies, and requiring of the cultivators of the soil, only to sow the seed, and reap the fruits, as a matter of course. As if, my brethren, he who *“holds the waters in the hollow of his hand,”* and *“maketh the clouds his chariot,”* and *“rides upon the whirlwind and directs the storm,”* might not, in requital of our criminal forgetfulness and desertion, descend, as he has often done, and in every part of our country, in the overwhelming flood and the desolating tornado, and sweep away in a moment, with the resistless breath of his displeasure, the labor of months, and all the self-confident expectations founded thereon; as if drought, and mildew, and blight, were not the instruments of his vengeance, and untimely frosts and chilling blasts, the ministers of his righteous indignation.

In the estimation of some, our republican form of government, containing within itself a sort of elastic principle, remedial and compensatory, has been counted on for returning prosperity; as if, my brethren, the purest form of government, unsustained by the divine blessing on its administration, could of itself avert calamity from the nation, propitiate the insulted majesty of God, neglected, forgotten and forsaken by the creatures of his power, and the favored recipients of his

providential mercies; shut the floodgates of his merited wrath, opened on a perverse and ungrateful community, and bring back upon "*a sinful people, laden with iniquity,*" and upon the country they inhabit, the full tide of its former abused prosperity!

And not to detain you, my brethren, with additional instances, the hopes and expectations of a large portion of the community were fixed, presumptuously fixed,—(the truth must be spoken, and I trust it may be spoken without offence, when no offence is intended,)—on the late lamented occupant of the Chair of State. His elevation to office, was to cure at once every existing evil, and extricate the country from every difficulty, both at home and abroad. Confidence would immediately revive—credit be restored—commerce in all its branches be resuscitated—industry and enterprise meet with a rich reward—and the security and happiness of the people placed on an unshaken foundation. Thus, in that spirit of *man-worship*, of late years so alarmingly prevalent among us, did men speak. Thus did they give utterance to their hopes. And all this, irrespective of HIM who controls the destinies of nations, and ordereth all things after the counsel of his own will. And how *soon*, and how *emphatically*, has this presumptuous confidence been rebuked, and proclaimed to be, with other devices, "*a broken cistern, that can hold no water!*" In the mysterious providence of God, the anticipation has been blasted, almost in its very inception, and a lesson taught, which I pray may be impressed on every mind, that vain is all dependence "on man, whose breath is in his nostrils;" that God is *sovereign*; that *national* as well as *individual* confidence,

if not placed on him, is placed on a foundation of sand, and is not only utterly vain and worthless, but criminal also, and condemnatory. The lesson has been given under deeply afflicting circumstances. A whole people have been thrown into mourning by the event. But if *painful*, it is in its tendencies *salutary*. It exposes the fallacy and the folly of any confidence in "*an arm of flesh;*" in any *man*, however promising in physical health and vigor, and however distinguished for talent, wisdom, integrity and patriotism.

And, my brethren, the result has been already salutary. The whole American people, startled and astounded at the melancholy tidings, have been led to serious reflection; have had forced on their attention, the brevity and uncertainty of life; the vanity and insecurity of the highest earthly honors, and the worthlessness of all human ambition. And out of it, has grown the prompt and appropriate, and in its sentiments and phraseology, feeling recommendation of our present Chief Magistrate, which calls us together to-day. This first official act, after his assumption of the government, is a return to first principles, to the pious sensibilities and godly habits of the patriots of the revolution, the illustrious founders of this Republic, which afford a presage, the first which for many years has occurred worthy of any dependence, of returning prosperity. If rightly improved, if carried out in the commendable spirit of its conception, we may hail it as the harbinger of general relief of the distress of which we complain, and an indication that the bitterness of social and national evil is past. We may regard the experiment of our Republican form of government as fully

and successfully tried. We may count again on the smiles of a beneficent Providence, and look with confidence for the same *grace* which made us, to continue us, *free and independent*. "Esto perpetua," is the prayer of every true patriot, when he contemplates our invaluable political system, and the security and happiness and general prosperity which, when well and righteously carried out, it affords to the people. And it will be a prayer heard and answered, if God be honored,—if his blessing be sought—if his protection and guidance be sincerely invoked by those who govern, and they who are governed. But *not otherwise*. For "*righteousness alone, exalteth a nation; while sin is not only a reproach, but a snare, a fruitful source of ruin to any people.*"

Such sentiments as these, I am well aware, may be and are subjects of ridicule by many, and decried and repudiated as fanaticism and priestcraft. It is the boast of some who call themselves, *par excellence*, patriots, that in this country there is entire freedom from the shackles of religious belief and obligation. And this, they account liberty. But it is not liberty, but a most dangerous licentiousness. And they, moreover, mistake their position as the privileged participants of our political blessings. It is true, no particular form of religion is established by law, nor its support enforced by legislative enactment. But our republican institutions do not, in the way and to the extent they suppose, afford ground for their unholy congratulation, that here is no union of church and state; and their boast of exemption from the supposed restraints and grievances

which such connection involves. In a certain sense indeed, in a sense implying official recognition and direct support on the part of the government of the country, such an union is to be deprecated, and emancipation from its thraldom is a matter of congratulation. But if there be meant by it, an entire disruption of all the ties that bind us to God, and an exemption from the salutary restraints which christianity imposes; so far from being a subject of congratulation, it is a foolish and wicked boast, and must and will be practically nugatory, if our republican institutions are to be maintained inviolate, and even continue to exist. "He must be blind to all the lessons of experience," says a recent eloquent writer, "who would wish to divorce religion from government. Never in the history of man, heathen or christian, has that corner stone been withdrawn, but the social state has as quickly toppled over into ruin. How indeed could it be otherwise, with a thing thus rendered *baseless*; for upon what does a government, in discarding religion, rest? Evidently upon nothing (for nothing else remains to it) but mere physical force. But then, the superiority of physical force resides necessarily in the hands of the governed: quickly, therefore, would the governed, in such cases, become the *governors*. And as again practical government, by its very nature, must soon settle into the hands of a few, again must come the overturn of the few by the many; and government, falsely thus named, become a never ending series of restless revolution. This indeed is a lesson, one would think, after the French revolution, the world now as little needs, as it would desire

to have repeated. 'The arch of religion alone, bears up the fabric of society out of the unfathomable gulf of anarchy.'*

These are noble sentiments; and they are sanctioned by experience, and responded to by common sense. And the instance alluded to in illustration thereof, is singularly apposite, and solemnly instructive, and deserves to be seriously pondered on by the people of this republic. Revolutionary France is a standing illustration and an awful memento of the divorce of government from God and religion. *Then and there*, the experiment was fully tried, and proved an utter failure. The liberty which the demagogues of the day vaunted of, and with which they gulled the fierce populace, and through them rode into power, led on directly to a stern despotism, which ruled its subjects with a rod of iron, and convulsed, oppressed and devastated continental Europe for years with its lust of power and its mad ambition. Christianity was abolished by a public edict, and pronounced by the constituted authorities of the country, to be a stupendous fraud upon mankind. To profess it, was made a crime against the State, and punished with death. Every feature of it was studiously obliterated, even its slightest external emblems. An appalling atheism usurped its place in the public mind, which proclaimed at every corner, "*there is no God;*" and wrote on the sepulchres of the dead, the heart-chilling sentence,—"***Death is an eternal sleep!***" The human mind was indeed unfettered by any chains beside those which, in its licentiousness, itself soon forged and riveted. And what was the result? It is

* New York Review, for April, 1841,—page 314.

inscribed on the page of history, in letters of blood. A people famed for centuries for the courtesies and charities of life, became at once a nation of infuriated demons, revelling in cruelty, in sensuality and in lust. The very foundations of society were broken up, and Anarchy, with its tyrant sceptre, reigned triumphant. The tenderest ties of consanguinity and friendship were rudely and savagely severed—the fountain of social feeling was broken up, and all the kind and gentle sympathies of our common nature were immolated on the shrine of their foul idolatry. Moral principle, with all the noble characteristics of the soul, were lost amid the whirlwind and the storm that devastated the devoted land. Virtue fled affrighted from the scene of violence and wickedness; and Humanity wept, blushing with shame while it wept, over acts of cold blooded cruelty, of unappeasable ferocity, unparalleled in the records of our race. Justly and forcibly therefore, my brethren, does the writer before quoted, remark, in animadverting on the popular fallacy, that religion is unnecessary to the safety of the State, and any connection of the one with the other, a thing to be deprecated as inimical to liberty,—“deeper than man’s will, older than any history but that of man, is the origin of this sneered at alliance of Church and State. Sole remnant, we say, of Paradise, if rightly understood and duly practised. Were it not indeed for this ‘salt’ within it, society must needs have long since putrified in its corruption, under the follies, the crimes, and the infidel philosophy of men. Were it not for the ‘Church’ within the ‘State,’ the visible forms we mean of christian faith, and their invisible and ceaseless working keeping

guard over its safety, how quickly would an infidel State either crumble into ruin, or rush into madness! Where, we ask, are the bolts and bars that would suffice, when the walls and towers that could give strength to a State that knew not God, and recognized no conscience, and had no fear but what man could do unto it? * * * * * Such was ever the teaching of even the heathen's better philosophy. *Quid vanæ leges sine moribus proficiunt?* Where can law rest but upon morals, and where morals, but upon religion? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who shall guard our guardians? Who keep our keepers? Who rule the ruler? Who, answers Plato, but God? * * * * " And, my brethren, a wiser than Plato proclaims, what universal experience teaches, that "*the fear of God,*" with States, no less than with individuals, "*is the beginning of wisdom;*" and "*except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it; except the Lord keep the city*—and we may add, the State,—*the watchmen waketh but in vain.*"

Let us then, beloved brethren, as constituent parts of the State, as citizens of this growing Republic, ponder these things well, and learn to regard religion, practically recognised in our public affairs, and by our public men, as the great safeguard of our liberties. Let us, so far as we are concerned, and with all the influence we can exert, resolve to carry out, practically, the laudable recognition of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, by our rulers, manifested and solemnly proclaimed in the official recommendation of this day,

† New York Review, April, 1841,—page 316.

which, in appropriate and impressive language, significantly commands to the whole American people, GOD—THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD—as their strong tower of defence—the source of all their blessings—and the only anchor of their political as well as personal hope. With humble and contrite hearts, let us “worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker;” bend low before his footstool, and confessing our past negligences, our multiplied offences, our wilful and presumptuous sins, implore his promised and proffered forgiveness and mercy. Let us invoke his heavenly benediction, his protecting care, his providential goodness, for ourselves and our country. And let us determine, in the strength of divine power, by precept and example, and with all the influence we possess, to set our faces as a flint against the irreligion and immorality, the pride, the pomp, the luxury, which are so rife in the land; and eschewing every vain and worthless dependence, and abandoning every “*broken cistern*” which we may have “*hewed to ourselves*,” return in humble submission, in devout acknowledgement, in holy confidence to Him who is the “FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS,” whence alone flows, and can flow, individual and national prosperity, the happiness and welfare of the citizens, the stability, the perpetuity and the glory of the State.—AMEN.

[2 Aug 1832.]





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